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The SUMMONS
OF THE KING
A Play by
PHILIP BECKER GOETZ

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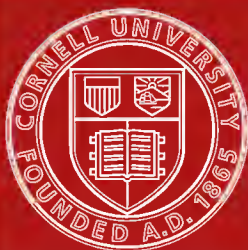
The summons of the king: a play by Philip



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THE
SUMMONS OF THE KING

A Play

BY

PHILIP BECKER GOETZ



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N O T E

The play deals with the earlier part of the invasion of Italy which KING CHARLES THE EIGHTH of France undertook in the latter half of the year 1494 to gain the throne of Naples. Hearing of the KING's intention, PIERO DE MEDICI, insecure and unpopular at Florence, surrendered three Tuscan fortresses to win the KING's support. The Florentines learnt of this act and promptly banisht PIERO, who fled to Venice. At the opening Pisa is subject to Florence, but soon revolts. Before leaving Milan for Pisa, the KING has become infatuated with NUCCIA, a peasant girl. About her most of the action revolves.

P E R S O N S

KING CHARLES THE EIGHTH OF FRANCE

CARDINAL ST MALO, *his spiritual adviser*

ORSINI, *a Florentine nobleman of the Medicean party*

VINCENZO, *his son, in love with NUCCIA*

PEZZO, }
CEPPI } *servants to ORSINI*

SAVONAROLA, *the Dominican, opposed to the Medici*

CAPPONI, *a Florentine, leader of the people against the Medici*

BONSI, }
VALORI, }
VESPUCCI, } *friends to CAPPONI,
 members of the Signory*

LUCIO, *a soldier of the Pisan, SOLDORATO*

CHAMBERLAIN *to the KING*

NUCCIA, *a Milanese girl, known as LOIS while mistress to KING CHARLES*

RABACCIO, *her uncle*

STELLA, *her companion*

A PISAN

French soldiers, courtiers, friars, flower-girls, fruiterers, poet, citizens, watchmen.

ACT ONE

*Scene: Pisa. The Florentine army of escort to
King Charles is within the French camp.*

SCENE ONE

A part of the field near the camp.

VINCENZO AND PEZZO

VINCENZO

She hath not more scorn for a low-born clout
Than lies in the neglect my gifts endure.
The chain, the emerald—what avail my pains?
I will to Florence fly. Am I a fool,
Some jester fed with table's overflow
Mid sufferance of weaklings high, who laugh
On what they comprehend not? I am born
Of honorable blood: it heats and cools
At causes other breeds hold light as air.

PEZZO

What an ungentle destiny is thine,
My lord, to own such sickly mastery
Of blood! Had I a sire whose name I knew—
A name tho common as the earth we tread—
Herein I yet should be the victor known,
Not let a mere girl with a languid smile
Bid me a scornèd suitor meet my friends,
And hear the hollow rouse crown all the cups
Wherein they drench my poor, defeated story.
'Tis thou, not she, who is more worthy tears,
And tears of bitter shame! To spare, forsooth,

THE SUMMONS

No task to win a blossom France hath plucked,
And at thy first adventure run away:
What a brave heart! Thou art no Florentine.
Think not of Florence, thine's a softer soil.

VINCENZO

Oft have I marked your argument take wing—
As nimbly now—and then your passion seize
His vantage opportunely with quick taunt
Upon my high birth, just to wound my pride.
Were I some warring devil with loud boasts
Of brawl and wantonness, I were more prized.
The languid smile that tempts your merry tongue
Shall turn my way, count me a coward else.
To them what if I seem an unripe youth,
If unto her my love show copeless heavens?

PEZZO

As vain and shifting as the breathing spring!
Think what thy noble sire will say, who sent
Thee secret thence to spy upon the world
Not dream upon the first two lovely eyes.
What but to dry those prodigal tears of youth
For lorn Bianca—

VINCENZO

Silence. Oh, with shame
I redden to forget that sudden-spent
Delight that filled me when Bianca first
I met that night among the Ponte shops.
Have you not often marked on moonlit nights
How long there stole the silver thru your soul.
Or ere you lifted eye and saw the orb
Unfettered of a cloud possess the sky?
And then as if until that hour you ne'er
Had guessed her potency—so old, so known—
You learn the virgin charm that spells the dark
And stirs remotest music? So Bianca.
Was it a strange thing that I instant loved

OF THE KING

And instant would have made her beauty mine
To crown with worship of young ritual?
Yet now my home heart for Bianca's pale
And willing loveliness is no more mine
Than lasting is the rose against her lips,
Or this is home and yonder tree a booth.

PEZZO

Softly; thou hast turned broken vow itself
To gentle melody. Had not thy sire
Been firm, thou wouldst have wed the unhappy
lady
Thou art most swift to swear was lightly loved.
Is honor such a bubble to be danced
Upon the pouting waves of a boy's blood?

VINCENZO

Peace, sir, thy words knock on well-guarded ears:
Thy years are mine to borrow in my need,
Not thine to hoard. That I do love this maid,
Dear Pezzo, deep I know.

PEZZO

Now for hot oaths!
Tell me the certain signs, what portents lead
The doubting eyes up to the sovereign star?

VINCENZO

Mock on as likes thee, still I am unshaken.
I will disclose how lovers know their hour.
Methinks, apart from her I am not I,
Or else an echo of my living self,
Some hollow instrument of broken strings.
Day-long I wander mid far-memored dreams
Wherein her spirit, ere her face, I found.
I never now may pace with running stream
But by its magic marge some time we there
Have counted grasses, lingered, silent gazed,

THE SUMMONS

And in some cave mingled a mirrored kiss.
Tempest times, too, when lightning threads the
heart

Of tangled wildwood, bring me the thin touch
Of her pale, shuddering hand, asking my shelter.
And when a lute I hear from the wide meads
Of airy music pluck one after one
Bright blossoms, hers are all, so fell they all
Adown her loosened hair ages ago
Ere love immortal framed him mortal words.

PEZZO

This is no place for such as thou, Vincenzo:
Only the moon's car suits this delicate freight,
And only skyey coursing fits this mood.
I am an old plain man of waning wit,
Yet this inflaming speech hath lighted me
A path thru mine o'erwildered memory.
I am less old than seasons give me out,
The wrinkles of my time are smoothed away
And I again am with thee, face to face
With dreams that couch in the blue-vaulted
youth,

Before the task and fret, the strife and grief
Banish the starry vision to despair.
Nay, I was once a lover — long ago.
'Twas in the days when Milan was at feud
With Genoa and I sought fame and folly
Against the cunning seamen. One mild night
In May, when wild excursions made a prize
Of a few huddled huts along the shore,
Drunken and rudely jesting, in we burst,
Some four of us, upon a frightened group
Upon their knees about a father's bed.
One was for harrying the maidens there,
Another yelled to hale the sick man forth,
Another thirsted for a cup the more,
And one stood silent at the open door.
That man was I; for, kneeling at the bed,
And turning pleading eyes upon our rout,

OF THE KING

If ever God made one like my own mother,
There seemed she kneeling, there turned pleading
eyes.

An instant all grew blurred: those tender girls
To me were sudden sisters, for them I
Thereon had died to shield from ruffian harm.
My sotted brain sank her carousal dregs,
And ere they questioned cause, our filthy crew
Reeled to a bagnio — I forget the rest.

VINCENZO

Well?

PEZZO

Oh, next day I stole away from camp.
The man had died and she with hers was left
In need and grief. My scanty all was theirs.
Thereafter till we pushed up thru the passes
I daily with a secret joy gave aid.

VINCENZO

Good Pezzo, is this all?

PEZZO

Not all, not all.

VINCENZO

The mother then was widowed.

PEZZO

Aye, and grateful.
Yet grateful more the wide-eyed, eldest girl,
Who found my soldier heart as swiftly as
She learnt her own heart, loving wretched me.

VINCENZO

What of thy pleasant girding on my love?
Hath not thy youth been guilty with us, too?
How wilt thou teach me skill to quell mine ardor

THE SUMMONS

When thou hast known the ache one never exiles?
In fine, she bade thee glance another where?

PEZZO

Nay, nay, that had indeed been fortunate;
I then had steeled myself against despair
Or guessed her tongue a traitor to her soul;
But when we parted in the blazing noon,
The sun wrought of her hair a gorgeous crown,
And I crawled northward with the men—

VINCENZO

Dear friend!

PEZZO

At our home-coming the whole shore lay bare.

VINCENZO

But Florence triumphed in that desolation:
Genoa floated barges with no threat.

PEZZO

Believe, her victory I love, Vincenzo,
Yet have I memory of what I know
Was certain love. Yet why so idling here
When soon the hobbling savior of our fate
Will bid us guide him east? Thank God, Piero
Need fear no balking of our new support.
I would the passions of the people cooled
Before thy father fan them with contempt.

VINCENZO

Why march we with the Frenchmen into Florence?

PEZZO

O youth, O youth, the down hangs on thy question!
To have a lady see an angry sire,

OF THE KING

Whom, if her beauty please, an amorous boy
Would beg for grace to marry instantly,
Heedless of how our Medici come home
Or how the Signory with Charles may prosper.

VINCENZO

Oh that I had a rapier wit for you!
But, missing that, I have a better arm
With which were I to strike as oft as you
Offend me with your insults, you were dead
A thousand several times.

PEZZO

A slower pace
Better befits a noble and a soldier.
What think you France intends in Italy?
He holds with Ferdinand a high dispute,
And forth to Naples o'er the prostrate states
Doth bridge a triumph to that distant throne.
Our quarrels are of tributary import:
And exiled Medici was not born deaf.
What, pray, are citizens to endless coffers,
To great allies and sly and secret words
Dropt seedlike into every inch of ground?
Are beggars, tradesmen, drivers of dumb beasts
Aught but the chaff for winds of royalty?
What would the jealous paupers with their lords?
What is their prate of freedom and of right?
Have they no grateful mind to those who planned
And shaped the glory where they shelter warm
And grow and keep their lives and young secure?
Vincenzo, I have seen the great abased,
The base uplifted by the fetid commons:
Their choice is ever for a sweeter thing,
Their memory is fleeter than a dream,
Their love, I swear, lighter than memory.
Were I Piero, they should vainly sue
To soil my heel in their unthankful streets.
My palaces and all my springs of wealth
I would not leave to them, I would raze all

THE SUMMONS

And hie me to another state to breed
A host for vengeance in the years to come,
And I would lead my serried insolence
Against their thoughtless gates and teach them
there
How noble dragons spit their terms in blood,
Until alarmed they found their liberty
An unconsoling name when princes threaten.

VINCENZO

Now see what sparks these sticks and stones pro-
voke!
And here comes one.

Enter a PISAN

PISAN

I pray I meet my friends.

PEZZO

Friends till we fight, sir. (*Striking him.*) Who
are you? Come, tell.

VINCENZO (*to PEZZO*)

Be not so rude: we are the guests of Pisa.

PEZZO

For that I care not half a fig, I itch
To fall my hand each day without a blow
On something out of Florence.

VINCENZO (*to PEZZO*)

I am young,
But I am not so far from judgment fled
I cannot see thee paid for wanton strokes.

PISAN

Your pardon, gentlemen. You sure are strange
To Pisa?

OF THE KING

VINCENZO

Florentines and soldiers, sir.

PISAN

To lead the Frenchman hence?

PEZZO (*again striking him*)

The Frenchman? — Dog!

Take that and that and that and let them prick
Thy poor jade memory we guide a king.

PISAN

I will not answer you in kind, rough man,
Being a serving-man of Pisa's best, (*Whispering*)
Who tho he be no royal bird, hath yet
A wide wing spread to hide a Medici.

VINCENZO

Forgive his heat, fellow, and thou, my Pezzo,
So wont to give me counsel and reproof,
For the dear Mary's grace, make him amends.
Some sightless poison of this nightly air
Hath sown within thy spirit angry humor.

PISAN

I am a soldier, too, and hither charged
With messages from Florence to a youth
Of noble birth but nameless.

VINCENZO

Nameless?

PISAN

Aye.

They found the bearer dead outside the gates.
The seal was broken and the name o'ergored,
And they who read it could not learn who wrote.

VINCENZO

Importing what, sir?

THE SUMMONS

PEZZO

Give it me.

PISAN

Soft, soft,

It holds a pleasant parley 'gainst the state
Of Florence — no longer Medici's, but free—
Which, were't returned unto the Signory,
Might lead to treason's end, if Pisa recked
What Florence does, for he who wrote forgot
Indeed the Florentines are here by grace
Not will of Pisa, who hath tossed the yoke.

PEZZO

What says the king?

PISAN

He will not pause his host,
But forthwith marches with intention sure.

VINCENZO

To bring Piero back into his own?

PISAN

Mark me: no man hath read this King of France.
How know you he will prop your banisht lord?
What heart hath he who of his ships prepared
A rampart on Rapallo's beach, the while
Under the thunder of his guns stole out
With sword and brand the Swiss, albeit the town
Lay on her knees? What answer gave they?
What?

They made their torch a thing of festival,
And every soul an empty sacrifice;
The sick out of their beds they dragged and slew;
They would not credit men with Christ on lip.
Why, think you, flowing and fair promises
Will move him more? But now your legates went
Hence homeward, with perplexèd mind, dis-
mayed.

OF THE KING

None know his thought, to each he riddles gives.
Free Florence bids him enter as a friend,
While your Piero flatters him from Venice—
As if the bribe of Tuscan fortresses,
When first he touched our soil, were not enough.
Believe me, gentle sirs, I speak not so
Out of a rank and dreading hate to Florence:
That we in Pisa are no minions more
Is fruit of her own vain, divided will.

PEZZO

Still insolent?

VINCENZO (*aside*)

Beware! a Pisan friend
May pay us well or ere our men are safe. (*Aloud*)
Who are you, sir? You own a daring speech.

PISAN

Of Soldorato's house, an old-time friend
To the Orsini. Aye, you start at that.
Think you your mate had lived to tell another
How he insulted Pisa to my face,
Had I not known you of delighted honor?

VINCENZO

Come, come, thou bird of mystery, sing clear!

PISAN (*looking toward Pezzo*)

Your hawk is a bad carrier of gifts.

PEZZO

You dare not say they failed their master's aim.

PISAN

Nay, yet with such an ill delivery
That were I wooed, I'd never owe you thanks.
I marvel if so little grace hath won
The least rewarding smile.

THE SUMMONS

VINCENZO

You know of her?

PISAN

Some whit.

VINCENZO

What news of her? She lodges still,
Looks from that solemn window on the square,
Blesses the dullard street with heavenly eyes?
Speak, man, what happy sounds compose her
name?

What sea-town of the somber north immured
The music of long years within its breast
Till this pure soul made lovely echoes vie?

PISAN (*sighing*)

My mother yester eve despatcht me — me,
This very thing of mortal flesh and bone—
Unto your lauded lady, with a dish
Of our tomatoes dressed with tempting art.
She saw them hanging brilliant on a string
Against the upper wall within the court.
We noted her delighted hands and eyes;
Whereon with homely wisdom armed I sped
My way obedient, and, bowing low,
Proffered the gift. She smiled and, in dumb show,
Described the coming taste. But when she ate!
O brave Vincenzo, had you heard her then
Laugh rivulets of checked surprise and joy,
Orsini's line had learnt insanity.
For when a lovely lady loves to eat,
Eating what most she loves, what is a man?
A better war against the world were his
To wage than 'gainst this human argument.

VINCENZO

Tush, tush! You are a lower man than low.

PISAN

No lady foreign-born so honest eats.

OF THE KING

PEZZO

Now hath the Pisan smirched thy firmament,
Blasphemed thy thronèd lady, stirred thine anger;
But now when he defamed our native state,
My wroth and hasty stroke drew thy sore censure.
Say, shall we teach his tongue a lasting quiet?

PISAN

What need of strife? Our house is friendly still;
And were it not, I bid relent your ire.
At hand within my call lie hidden close
Two hundred archers, Soldorato's own.
Be well advised: you shall return in peace.
(Shouts heard)

VINCENZO

What's that?

PEZZO

Your men surprised or challenging?

PISAN

What's toward, I know not.

Enter LUCIO

Lucio, what news?

LUCIO

O sir, I know not for I saw not all.

PISAN

But what you saw?

LUCIO

Nights lately grow so dark.
I have not seen so dark a night as this
Since my old jade died hauling leeks and so.
Methinks it rains a dun here so I needs

THE SUMMONS

Must clean my palms a dozen times a night
To swear they still are just my own—

PISAN

Delay not, tell us what you saw, what did! Come, man,

LUCIO

To see not more than I, were less than well,
If your hot mind the bit of patience scorns.

PISAN

Now, Lucio, cease bandying, speak out:
You make these Florentines fierce, champing
steeds.

LUCIO

Then have I matter for their ears, I vow,
Else as they judge it, let them wend away.

VINCENZO

O man, be brief!

LUCIO

Briefly to say, I saw—

PISAN

A—

LUCIO

crowd of silly necks grow long with wonder.

VINCENZO

Whereat—

LUCIO

I wondered cranes were never red.

VINCENZO

Why, Lucio?

OF THE KING

LUCIO

In shame for mortal fools.

PISAN

Well?

LUCIO

Hear them shout!

VINCENZO

What! is it Medici?

LUCIO

A Medici! Aye, such a one as goes
Unshod of foot and bowed, foul with the road.
Faw! Naught more noble than the dark-eyed Friar,
Who comes again with message for the King.
Tonight with short unceremonious word
He passes with no proper awe of us
Who make the world resound with woe and arms,
And coldly asks where he shall see the King,
As if at mess I bid you hand my dole.

PISAN

What then?

(Shouts heard)

LUCIO

The vile crowd hails a painted stick,
Hangs on his scattered speech with hungry ears.

VINCENZO

This must be he—the hot firebrand of Florence.

PEZZO

To whom we are beholden that our chief
Is dispossessed and hated of the commons?

VINCENZO

Let's after. What he wills he never hides. *(Exeunt)*

THE SUMMONS

SCENE TWO

The King's Pavilion. The same night.

KING CHARLES, CARDINAL ST MALO, COURTIERS;
LOIS, STELLA; CHAMBERLAIN

CHAMBERLAIN

He will not be denied his audience.

KING

And so declares? Well, we are merry now,
Else were his keen demand more stubborn met.

CHAMBERLAIN

Take I thy lofty leave to bid him enter?

KING

Let him approach. Be gone!

(Exit CHAMBERLAIN)

LOIS

Who is the man?

KING

A friar much in awe at Florence now,
Who is no lover of our Medici,
And came ambassador to welcome us
So long we would abjure the falling cause
And hedge no tyrant 'gainst the general weal.
When first in Italy our foot we set,
Alone of all who spake the friar praised
And hailed us the new Cyrus, sent of God.

LOIS

'Twas he who hailed you Cyrus?

OF THE KING

KING

Even he.
'Fore heaven I somehow dread that single soul
With single stare and single, quick-stopt speech.

LOIS

Would I might look upon so strange a man!

KING

And shall. He comes.

Enter SAVONAROLA with two BRETHREN

Welcome again to Pisa.

SAVONAROLA

God grant thee wisdom with thy health, French
Charles.

LOIS (*aside*)

Mary forgive me! Whom called this one mother?
Stella, so keen an eye, a shape so ugly,
Never before this day made groan the earth.

STELLA (*aside*)

A holy man reck's little of his body.
I am afraid to dare the searching eyes,
And oh! what hungry, starvèd lips and cheeks!

LOIS (*aside, gaily*)

I wonder if they ever kissed a woman?

KING

So let us hear. What brings you here again
To tempt the dangers of the night-clad camp?

SAVONAROLA

King Charles, I come to speak with thee alone.

(LOIS *looks appealingly to KING*)

THE SUMMONS

KING

These witnesses we would not so dismiss:
If you have secrets, they will hide them safe;
And for ourselves, what we intend we publish.

SAVONAROLA

Then brief my message. Rumor wings report
Ye march to Florence for the Medici.

KING

Who speaks that borrowed words from France's
lips?

SAVONAROLA

The embassy announce thou cozenest.

KING

Gave we offence to any in that body?

SAVONAROLA

I stand not here to spend vain, empty words;
I care not what the mode of thy discourse.

KING

We would respect, not anger you; some stay
Of further parley would desire of you,
Whereby you blame the instrument of God.

SAVONAROLA

You know the state of Florence, King of France,
You know God's hand hath sore oppressed us all,
That for our sins we exiled Medici,
Who taught our fingers sloth, hatred our hearts.
We bade you enter resurrected Florence,
You whom in dreams I saw my Father send
To scourge the mockers of sweet righteousness
And with your tide flood wanton Italy,
To lift the base and hurl the mighty headlong.
A while you knocked on stubborn-hearing gates

OF THE KING

Until your armies starved the keys to turn;
And when your men marched onward insolent
In triumph o'er the people of my blood,
My brothers, sisters, friends, I told them how
Above the screaming ruin I heard God
Cheer Charles of France, the sword of this our
land.

Now with our godless foe what pact is made
That you so answer our ambassadors?
We begged your aid to make secure the state:
What juggler's word is this you toss to us?
"When you arrive, all shall be as you will."
Are you a friend to Medici or no?
This would I learn or ere I homeward fare.
If you are minded fast to fetter us
In the reforgèd chain we late have broken,
I counsel memory how swift the wrath
Of God descends upon forgetful children.
These victories on alien soil to France
Are but our sin and weakness, not your strength;
Think not in pride to trample and insult
Our quick Republic, lest she teach you pain.

KING

You bid me come to Florence, and thereon
An embassy prescribes what I may do.
A conqueror is not affrighted thus,
That subjects show their teeth like ingrate wolves.

SAVONAROLA

Ware, King of France! Count never Florence sub-
ject!
The city you abide in owes her tribute.

KING

Mistake not us, good man. We are a friend
To Florence, and to Medici—not less.
He hath relieved us often: when we ailed,
Sent men of physic, and when we defeated

THE SUMMONS

His countrymen, nobly he greeted us.
We will not think his princely manners false,
Nor, granted so, would we in kind respond.
This will we say, this bear your waiting people:
The quarrel 'twixt Piero Medici
And his great state is not our own to wage;
Withal we cannot be esteemed his foe.
Bid Florence ope her gates against our coming.

SAVONAROLA

Have I, King, walked with these my brethren
twain
The long way hither, high of heart and trust,
To hear these light words born of royal lips?
Verily all my dream is vanity:
Here first the semblance of my hope shows false.
So stunned, I am incapable of wrath.
God led thee into Italy to prove
The folly of the din and feats of arms.
I go, unto the Signory I go;
Yet once again I charge thee, think on God.

(Exit SAVONAROLA and two BRETHREN)

LOIS (*excitedly*)

Call him again!

KING

Wherefore?

LOIS

I must again
Behold that face and speak in living speech.

KING

This is a fancy: he will think we yield.

LOIS

I care not—I am strangely moved to this.

OF THE KING

STELLA

If he should ask—

LOIS (*wildly*)

I care not what he asks!
Will no one call him?

KING

'Tis impossible.
Come, lady, blow this fancy out of mind.
Would you imperil us? Were we not kind?

LOIS

Oh, when he came, I mocked him in my heart,
He was so illy shapen and so starved.

KING

Well?

LOIS

Yet his soul warmed every word he spake.

KING

Mayhap your pious maid hath turned your heart.

LOIS

Or so or so, beg him return!

KING

Tush, nay!
None shall gainsay us, none shall after him.
In Florence we will answer with our terms.
See, woman, that you straightway follow us,
Or, by Saint Genevieve, you shall atone.

(*Exit KING with all save LOIS and STELLA*)

STELLA

What would you now?

THE SUMMONS

LOIS

I have no way but one.

(Slowly)

Knocking, knocking on my unshriven soul
I hear. She is a girl forgotten long,
Pleading again for clean, untroubled hearth
And solemn, dreamless sleep and Mary's eyes
Unquestioning at morn and stealthy eve.
"To lift the base and hurl the mighty headlong,"
Those were his words, simple and searching
words.

If this French king be sent to us from God,
What thing am I to lure him down to Hell?
And if God fated him a byword hence,
Why must I fouler smirch his royalty?

STELLA

You cannot flee from him.

LOIS

You fear his force?

STELLA

Aye, and—

LOIS

And what? Say on, be not afraid.

STELLA

You gave yourself.

LOIS

I swear I did not — first.

STELLA

You knew a foreign king could rank bestow,
But a soul's honor he would only take.

OF THE KING

LOIS

No more. Who can defend what friends will
blame?

The man I fain had laughed to scorn hath taught
Me how I sinned. The story he shall know.
They shall not stay me. I must seek him out.

STELLA

They can and will prevent you: it is night.
What is a woman 'gainst the guards or rout
Of loutish soldiery? You are but mad.

LOIS

The soldiers come from Florence still are here.
I need not you; I ask not you to follow:
I am in sin secure—worse cannot fall.
Were you along, I should be then alarmed.

STELLA

Then take alarm, for with you I will go.
Oh, think not I would serve you in your ease
To run away at need. Some outward shift
With instant art gains us the way he went.
Within the hour you meet the Florentine.
(*Exeunt*)

THE SUMMONS

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

A road leading out of Pisa. The same night.

Enter SAVONAROLA and his two BRETHERN

FIRST BROTHER

Pray, brother, why this haste?

SAVONAROLA

What need of rest?
So we move on this night, one day is gained.

SECOND BROTHER

Have thought upon your health, or you perforce
Must rest within the walls and grieve the people,
Bearing no tidings from the expected king.

SAVONAROLA

They fail who doubt, they win who see, the goal.
Tonight the host of Hell cannot prevail.

FIRST BROTHER

Hush, heard you voices?

SECOND BROTHER

They seem to follow us.

SAVONAROLA

Perchance the king repents his godless answer.

SECOND BROTHER

And e'en to call.

OF THE KING

FIRST BROTHER

They may be men of sin.

SAVONAROLA

The tomb is ever tardy, let them come;
They will not find a well-fed purse to cut.

FIRST BROTHER

Nay, brothers, listen. Darkness throbs appealing.

SECOND BROTHER

Attend we.

SAVONAROLA

Nay, yet slowly onward move.
Face not again obstinate Pisa's guest.

SECOND BROTHER

They hasten toward us. Let them hail us first.
(*After calling, enter Lois in boy's dress and*
STELLA)

LOIS

Is this the road to Florence?

FIRST BROTHER

Aye.

LOIS

We twain,
This maid and I, would with you thither wend,
In holy wedlock there to join our souls.
She willing flies an angry sire who blames
Our summer blood and eager promising.
I know you will not bid revolt be glad;
But continent to Florence would we go
And there give you our moving history.
Only we crave protection ere you judge.

THE SUMMONS

SAVONAROLA

Follow behind: you lead a woman here.
It is unmeet our company be weighed
With her whose safe conduct is yours to guard.
Follow behind.

(Exeunt SAVONAROLA and his two BRETHREN)

LOIS

O Mary, holy mother,
Forgive me, for I fear this is thy doom.
Methought I had a firm heart for a lie,
But I have horror of this lonely road.

STELLA

Fear not for me. Darkness hath kindly arms
And doth not always aid the evil thought.
Withal, what if we die?

LOIS

Hush, girl, not that,
Not that. God will not let me die untimely.

STELLA

Already they have left us. Haste we after.

(Exeunt LOIS and STELLA)

Enter VINCENZO and PEZZO

VINCENZO

Scan close the road. They must have gained the
friar.

PEZZO

Here are the forward footsteps of three men;
And see! my boy, come, come, kneel down and
kiss.

VINCENZO *(hurrying)*

The tell-tale dust is delicately pressed.
God in His mercy pardon all the sins
Of that dear Pisan.

OF THE KING

PEZZO

And my odious hand
That might have struck him down this very night.

VINCENZO

How was it possible he learned their fraud
And sought us out?

PEZZO

Ere that he reached his house,
The knave whose raiment hides thy lady's wiles
Straight ran to tell his Pisan darling all—
The house, recall, was neighbor where France
lay—
And she tongue-laden, by a happy chance,
Tho late at night met our returning Pisan.

VINCENZO

That he should running find us—that is strange,
Who knew my love for her.

PEZZO

Think you he likes
Us out of Pisa, sparing or luring us?

VINCENZO

I nothing fear from him—he knows our house.

PEZZO

I would I trusted so. But see! a light.

VINCENZO

Too faint — no torch: devils are in the air.

PEZZO

Come, boy. Upon their track the King may chase.

THE SUMMONS

VINCENZO

How long hath moonlight helped our baffled eyes?

PEZZO

But now she crowned the cloudy muniments.

VINCENZO

A virgin omen! Mary's mercy, come!

(Exeunt VINCENZO and PEZZO)

SCENE TWO

Another part of the same road near a wood.

LOIS and STELLA

LOIS

A fearsome spot to give a cry, dear Stella.
What was that call? Methought it faintly moved
Pursuing us, and now our torches die.

STELLA

There! heard you that?

LOIS

Again. Now had we legs!
And yet I dread the holy friars, too.

STELLA

We must be very brave.

LOIS

You mean, *I* must?

STELLA

At least take on brave show, defending both.

Enter VINCENZO and PEZZO

OF THE KING

PEZZO

Well, happy pair, a pretty time o' night
To walk beneath the moon to court adventure.

VINCENZO

Peace, brother, let us hear their story.

PEZZO

Well.

(*To VINCENZO*)

Support your part, be bold and merciless.

VINCENZO

Come, pretty youth, what is your business here?

LOIS (*aside*)

Sweet Mother, help! Would I were safe—

PEZZO

Come, speak!

LOIS (*at STELLA's urging*)

We journey h-hence t-to Florence—by your leave.

PEZZO

Who is this girl?

LOIS (*promptly*)

My sister.

VINCENZO

Favored less.

PEZZO (*to LOIS*)

A lie, fair youth, a lie. Your changing hue
Declares you mean to steal and marry her,
To walk your troth till, spent for food and rest,
You would repent your bargain, seize her portion,
And leave her to the wanton Florentines.

THE SUMMONS

To such a happy aim you must have means
And we are bent to have it with no harm.

STELLA (*to* LOIS)

Come, speak the truth.

LOIS

In fine, I spoke deceit.

It was our purpose thus to follow safe
The three Florentine friars, whom before
Us moving, night obscures; and there arrived,
To marry, full against our parents' wills.
Leave us so much as may secure us food
And buy a blessing on our holy vow,
And we'll deny you naught of all you seek.

PEZZO

A second lie, my boy, and well invented.

LOIS (*to* VINCENZO)

You, sir, have kinder eyes, have you no pity?

VINCENZO

What would you have me do?

LOIS

Save us to Florence.

VINCENZO

How know you we be not from Charles the King
To bring the guilty fugitives to Pisa?

LOIS (*to* STELLA)

We are undone.

STELLA (*to* LOIS)

Tell now the very truth.

PEZZO

And I wot well the King's hot wrath on you.

OF THE KING

LOIS

Then you will stay your hand until you hear.
If you are of his court, as you give out—
Albeit I think not so—I might command
Where now I beg. His consort I, thus clad,
Spelled by the urging of the holy man,
Ambassador from Florence, from Pisa flee.
France hath no force to keep me from my will,
Nor would reward you well returning hence
To him my body lifeless by my deed—
The which to prove you guiltless of would tax
Heads better than you wear. I say, make way.
(They move to go)

VINCENZO

Stay!

PEZZO

Nay, but let them go.

VINCENZO

Pezzo, desist.

Ladies, you err to judge us hireling men.
We both are men of Florence, soldiers both,
And hearing of your purposed traveling,
We after hurried instant in your aid.
That I may better prove the truth thereof,
I beg you take this ring against your coming:
In antique frame it holds a beryl-stone
Of much import and omen to who wears,
Tested to happy ends by many a son.
For you must needs find food and shelter there—
The holy friar may not be your host,
And should we plan to part, as most befits,
Since you shall ride by horses that we wait,
You shall at ease still follow him as guide.

THE SUMMONS

LOIS

Such gentle ends from such beginnings, sir?
I fain would know to whom so deep my thanks
As never can be tongued, within me must
Be bosomed. Here amends so gallant lie
That other cause than simple thought moves you.
Why pause you?

VINCENZO

I — I know not, lady, I
Will follow at a distance, fear no peril.
My friend will hither lead the horses when
We sight them. You are safe. Mayhap again
Tomorrow we shall bolder be to speak
And more observe. So, by your leave — good
night!
Come, come.

(Exeunt VINCENZO AND PEZZO)

STELLA

Who may they be?

LOIS

They will return.

OF THE KING

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

A Street in Florence. Several days after Act Two. Crowds gather to witness the entry of King Charles and his army.

FIRST CITIZEN

Now hail unto the King of France!

SECOND CITIZEN

Hail, Charles!

Enter KING CHARLES, COURTIERS mounted, army following.

A POOR WOMAN

Hail, thou defender of the dear republic.

A POET (*to the woman*)

I prithee tell me which is doubtless he,
I have composed—

A FLOWER GIRL (*raps the Poet on the head*)

Ow! Off my foot! And if
Your ode be half so heavy and so awkward,
The King will stop your mouth, thinking you jest.

A FRUITERER

O fig of all my fathers, that a king?
He looks a mother feared to let him see
The sun, twist-legged, half-browed, goggling ape,
His face a-wrinkled like a withered apple.
His wet-nurse was a lemon, I'll be sworn.

THE SUMMONS

THIRD CITIZEN

Can our salvation hang upon those eyes?

FLOWER GIRL

Roses a-plenty, here! buy roses?

HAWKER OF SWEETS

Sweets?

A spicy cake, a dainty for your darling.

Say, will you see the horses how they deck

Them o'er, these Frenchmen with their tricks and
gews?

Why, we are fools beside these ways of France.

*Enter LOIS and VINCENZO. The KING
passes on, but not without noting LOIS.*

LOIS

Think you he marked and knew me who I am?

VINCENZO

No, no; and if he saw, my company

With you would bid him deep distrust his eye.

LOIS

A face he ever knew he ne'er forgets;

If he beheld me, he remembered me,

If he remembers me, with Florence friend

I am not safe e'en if the Friar promise.

See how the people flock behind a King!

VINCENZO

But tell me, you are still in comfort sure?

LOIS

Think not I speak to you an ingrate word:

Almost upon their hands Pezzo and his

Uphold me, spare, relieve me; yet I know

How swift a change will fall when your proud
father

OF THE KING

Learns this unhappy fancy of his son,
Who loves a woman as impossible
Of hope as any driven curse from heaven.
One thing, Vincenzo, you shall say for me
When question knocks for answer, that I never —
No, Mary be my witness!—never lured
You on to this. I am not that — not false.

VINCENZO

Rest we upon the step. Even the priests
Have eyes away from God upon high France
And at this distance we can hear the shouts.
How men could love so foul and strange a sight
I cannot guess. Be sure our house is true
To Medici and so to France while true.
Within our hope he comes to spite the friar
And to restore our noble friend; but I
Put not much heart on France's love to him.
Tonight my father means to meet the king
And sound his purpose on the banishment.
I would observe so strange a being, hear
Him talk, conclude him friend or courtly tongued.

LOIS

He will not juggle any word he says,
But after he will gloze the soul he bodied
With smooth, obscuring phrase, refuting all
You thought he said. Hard pressed, importuned
to't,
He turns your mildest friend from hostile eyes.

VINCENZO

Who saddened you with all this world-old wisdom?

LOIS

Youth greys in brief apprenticeship to sin
And Latin is the general tomb of joy,
Which, when I learned with quick accomplishment

THE SUMMONS

While yet a girl, I little thought the dim,
Premonitory cadences my tongue
Should sound with perilous pleasing of a king.

VINCENZO

Why ever harp upon that somber string?
Have I not known, yet tell you o'er and o'er
How I do love you warmly as that hour
Of all unflowered hours I first beheld
Your hasting eyes that blazed their blessed prints
Across my waiting, wildered, marveling heart?
What would you have me do that you shall be
Enthralled by glory as by beauty I? (*Lower*)
Would his death blot the past? Speak, is it that?

LOIS

No, no, no, no! That were a futile thing.
No violent release, no crested crime
Must free me now; for there is writ in heaven
A line my prayers and blinding tears will fail
To purge, if Mary be not touched: to her
I must devote the life I yet am given.
The world must be a stranger to my thought.
Oh, how I see it all: my brain must know
No fair untroubled rest save unto God;
I must walk unafraid, strong with contempt
For gifts life brings with fresh and rosy hands.
You are not still so young that you forget
How some ways that we turn we never trace
Again, some are so starred with purity
And hope, rapture and upward certainty;
And other some so hooded with the hours
We would, but never may, recall and change.
I was a singing girl of Milan, I,
Who careless charmed the ears of France's king;
And when they said the king, the king, the king,
Would thank me with a public kiss, men laughed
That I stood hesitant, and called me fool.
Thus it befell. And then my uncle, where

OF THE KING

Unmothered and unfathered I had lodged,
Contrived and bargained with the Cardinal
To sell me, soul and body, unto France.
At first they told me I was queen by name
And right; they whispered how his former queen
Died ere he ventured south. By hollow rites
And solemn make-believe they hid the truth,
Which, when I saw, turned gruesome horror all,
A thing that wears our outward face and habit
But hides in every nook of its dark heart
A stagnant plague-pool, spewing poison out!
I fell upon the bed and cried to Christ,
The clean, white issue of a virgin womb,
To slay me on that altar where I lay,
Whereto they led me as a beast to death,
A death made quick with every conscious throb.
God shut his ears and bade his Church be still.
And then the cynic world taught me the laugh
Of one who sins and recks not, whom men fear.
The singing, low-born thing of Milan flesh,
I had a king my slave, drew worshipers
Bred of the highest loins of victor France.

VINCENZO

You loved your sin?

LOIS

Nay, rather gloried while
My soul lay in a drunken wilderness,
Until that night in Pisa on the heels
Of wanton jest anent his haggard show,
I felt Savonarola wake my life
With fire of simple truth and strength sincere.

VINCENZO

What were the words, the invitation strange?

LOIS

I know not; all grew chilling mist, and shrill
Flew startling whispers thru the emptied halls

THE SUMMONS

Of my dead self and sense. I closed mine eyes;
Still urged the panic call of alien music,
Sweeping with heavenly mercy all my past.
(*Rising*)

Vincenzo, all I ever hope to be
I vowed to render gracious to God's use,
Who sent that hallowed priest afoot from Florence
To menace France and call my soul from death
When most I needed counsel, help, and hope.

VINCENZO

And came not, too, my love to help thee, Lois?

LOIS

Name me no longer Lois, that is gone:
Call me but Nuccia, Milan knew me so;
I then may think you friend and prize your wish—
But for the rest—

VINCENZO

Remember how I love.
I loved you when you sinned, yet not your sin.
I love you what you are, a woman not
Untainted but withal still uncorrupt.
Bear witness, God, how if I loved her then,
Unheeding her enforced life, much more
I love her when she turns her soul to Thee.
The final word that buds or blights my life
At least delay.

LOIS

For peace my heart is hungry.
The world hath taken what alone God gives.
Vincenzo, think. I seek no balm, no ease:
Thorny the crown and rough the heavenward way,
The difficult and bitter penance wine
My lips shall welcome with a nuptial kiss,

OF THE KING

And all my vigils with my clement groom
Shall teach me how to wait and yearn for death.

VINCENZO

I will not yield you so. You are beset
With cruel memories that murder judgment.
You say that you will dearly prize my love.
How? Mewed and cloistered from my sight and
call?

Think you my love is but a season's fancy,
Born of the gala glancing at a festa?
The roots of this day's flowering lay below
The birth of Milan, ere up bubbled sea
Or rose my own wood-crowned Fiesole.
Long-after ages prophesied and brought
Us forth, in different cities bred us each;
From wonted haunts afar in a strange camp
We meet and gaze and one before the other
Divines the lore that none but twain may read.
Is this a small thing for the will of one
So lightly to dismiss? Of destiny
Are we such master arbiters that we
May counsel what the stars may spell for us?
The passion I have caught beholding you
Is not a libertine's for light o' heart,
The swift persuasion of the ignoble pulse—
No, no, I have you in my tranquil thought
My wedded wife, the mother of my children.
As for the solemn sound from honor's belfry,
The body cannot sin against the will.
I care not for what accident befell—
France has no import, owns no witless slave:
Illusion reigned, but now is dispossesst.
I come to lead you back to life thru love;
I challenge you your penitent design,
Nor will believe that there aloof from all
You swifter rise to God than here with me
Taking the solace of a duteous wife.
Are you afraid? Love bids you dare their word

THE SUMMONS

As once you dreaded not their whispered guess:
Mine is the harder but the nobler path.
Follow it, Nuccia; trust me, try my way.

LOIS

In my first cloister, blind, I should have died
Nor ever looked upon the earth and sun.
My life has been a death, now death were life.
I am afraid to trust this waking music,
This dear unlifting of incredible light.
There is a chill of fever as I hope,
Resolve and change, like a poor, shallow pool,
Subject to any sky, abject to airs.
Vincenzo, I am not your molded dream,
Born of the prayers of constant-hearted youth
And nourished with its very breath of hope,
Fair thru the willing blindness of desire
And dowered with mysterious rewards
The eyes of loveliness so vainly promise.
I am a woman overwise perforce;
I can foresee, as if this were my hour's
Authentic guess, the never-staying end,
The bruising hand of time upon our wills.
God first is just, then merciful and mild,
And when, tho innocent, we children sin,
He stirs the brackish cup of conscience up
And stings the federate lips of guilt with pain.
Yet would I not one instant grieve your soul,
Withholding what I know is worthless, cheap;
I will not obstinate mere praises here,
But vow you truly, if God will it so,
Yours will I be in union honorable.
My hand.

*(They stand silent and tearful. Exeunt as the
chattering crowds return, led by the burly FRUIT-
ERER)*

FRUITERER

Three times as many more, they say, come later.

OF THE KING

FLOWER-GIRL

A gallant lad of the King's very own
Caught me my rose and waved me what a kiss!

POET

What sturdy men, what stout, bright enginery!
Those huge balls were of iron, not of stone.
And did you mark the heavy-gaited guns?
I would not be the walls those dragons belch
Their rage upon.

BOY

Some carried pretty arms
Like to our bows but with the cord across.

HAWKER

Why, there are thousands, each with finery
Enough to scare my oven for a year.

POOR WOMAN (*running*)

Our Julietta's bairn is come untimely!
A-seeing of the King, and this and that,
The shouts, th' array, the noble knights, the heat,
And Mary only knows what else, she cries,
"I choke! Some air! Give me an arm or prop
To stay me!" So they carried her in haste,
And how they sweat! Sweet Jesu sweat not more
Within the garden where he prayed for us—
I say they carried her to Mazzo's booth.
Who goes with me?

(*Exeunt some*)

FRUITERER

A luckless birthday sure!
It was the ugly king Julietta saw:
That pumpkin-head would drive a bitch to whelp.

FIRST CITIZEN

And came with lance straight on and open sword.

THE SUMMONS

SECOND CITIZEN

Which obligates by law we are o'erwhelmed.

FIRST CITIZEN

O'erwhelmed I know not, but o'er Vecchio
They came so proud, it was a scurv'y boast.

SECOND CITIZEN

And yet you hailed him.

FIRST CITIZEN

What? Offend the rabble,
The riff-raff, scum, and idle ne'er-do-wells
By shutting teeth upon a rampant tongue?

SECOND CITIZEN

Had you kept peace, I had not greeted him.

FRUITERER (*fiercely and striking him*)

An had you not, it had been close observed,
You marked for traitor, seized and dragged and
burnt
Within the Square before the clapping mob.
And had your lordly master been o'erheard
To say what I have heard him say but now,
The Frenchmen would have flayed him—on my
oath!

(*Nods of approval*)

FLOWER-GIRL

Thank ye the stars ye shouted as ye did!

BOTH CITIZENS

We do, we thank—

HAWKER

Away!

BOTH CITIZENS

Hail, King of France!

OF THE KING

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

Palace of the Orsini. Late the same night.

KING OF FRANCE, ORSINI, and COURTIERS

KING

You are a friend to Medici?

ORSINI

I am.

KING

So much he says, that we will credit him.
We have no seated hatred 'gainst the state
They would uprear on common blocks and call
With majesty, Republic; but, methinks,
The counselors forget that Florence stands
Our subject, is not free to vaunt her will.

ORSINI

Your Majesty withal were well bestead
To blow no prideful spark to wanton flame.

KING

Of that anon. We would not counterfeit
A fear we never feel, nor cheat a hazard.
Briefly to speak, we mean to watch them build:
We haste not hence impatient aye of arms
And conquest; we have years and guns and force
To bring all Italy unto our will.

ORSINI

Enough: you come to flout me by design
Within my walls before your servitors.

THE SUMMONS

King, I would have you know Orsini's line
Was high before your own or Medici's!
I ask, I grant no favor; you are wrong
To think he conquers us who holds our land!
Whether the Medici come to his own
Or be withholden, as I am his friend
I joy or grieve, but shed no servile tear
To win your yielding, mitigate your threat.
Your hosts, they say, are yet not all arrived:
Then picture fiftyfold the strength, and all
Arm equally, you shall not bend or break
The soul that long has breathed this Tuscan air!

KING

There speaks a nobleman, good Cardinal.
We are not nice in lines of ancient birth,
We are a fresher stock, a later thought,
Than flourishes in the warm South. Ourselves
Must laugh that in these days you put your trust
In aught but strength of arms; but, since you
prize
Piero Medici, we are prepared
Out of our marvel and our will to you,
To stand him Regent in our stead, no less
In power than yourself would have us warrant.

ORSINI

Upon what terms? Kings never freely give.

CARDINAL ST MALO

Orsini, think how ill accords your tone
With this the King hath promised; besides
I of the holy Church support his cause:
We both are native in the chosen faith.

ORSINI

Well know I that, serenest Cardinal;
But many like myself of house and power
Do marvel how great Alexander seats

OF THE KING

Him calm upon his throne at Rome while here
The commons make such head against us all,
Daily inflamed by that same church they fed
Who are abandoned now.

CARDINAL ST MALO

It grieves us more
Than I have words to show my broken heart
That here the wanton Fra o'ertops the tallest,
That him they call ambassador of hope
Who so assails the precinct of the saints,
Whose scourging tongue spares none, but takes
delight
In overturning what we toil to rear.
Surely, Orsini, doth it move me, too,
His Majesty so curiously gives heed
To him as peer to us, as peer to us!
The hour is ripe to quell this springing peril.

ORSINI

Ofttimes of rulers high and tyrannous
A dear man to the commons finds the ear
Obsequious; and so they win the praise
Of clemency and fairness tho they show
Them slaves to wilfulness and whim. The King
Must know this is a keen and crack-brained knave
By accident here set, a torch amid
The thick chaff in an aged granary.
To see him is to marvel at men's folly,
To hear him patient out, to play the fool.

KING

You are but witness to your policy:
His silence would spread calm among the people
And bring them to your mastery. The Pope
Is wise, his churchly throne is universal,
His blessing hands are weighted for all men,
And to the Roman heart all others yearn.
I twice have heard Savonarola speak,
Once among brothers, once alone at night

THE SUMMONS

On secret mission come, to beg our aid
Against the robber nobles of your state.
Mere words, mere cunning of the will, mere craft
Array not such a host upon his side
And keep them single for the cause of right.
In him I see some sentinel or saint,
No dreamer, no imaginer of woe;
His menace is of God, his call a challenge.
Nathless, I mean to stablsh here secure
Piero, as I promised, but of you,
Orsini, I demand a solemn oath
You bring and give at once a maid as hostage,
Alive or dead, a Milanese I name.

ORSINI

A small demand to buy so large a boon.
Alive she suffers your revenge, and dead—
What then? A silent foe?

KING

You promise it?

ORSINI

I must desire her name, your Majesty.

KING

A common maid of Milan, Lois named.

ORSINI

And you would have me send to Milan hence?

KING

She is in Florence.

ORSINI

You have seen her, then?

KING

She lodges with a servant of your house.

OF THE KING

ORSINI

Ho, Ceppi!

Enter CEPPI

Seek and bid Vincenzo come.

CEPPI

'Tis done, Signore.

(Exit CEPPI)

ORSINI

Who is he, I pray?

CARDINAL ST MALO *(as the KING turns to him)*

A man mysterious, Pezzo his name.

ORSINI

And she you seek—what is her grave offence
That I must find and punish her with death?

KING

She plots against us who have friended her.

ORSINI

For this how am I bid to yield account?

KING

She lodges with your servant.

CARDINAL ST MALO

Of a sooth,
Orsini, graver fault no law admits.

ORSINI

I am well satisfied and see my debt.
Here comes my son.

Enter VINCENZO

Your Majesty—my son.

VINCENZO *bows to the KING, who looks amused.*

THE SUMMONS

ORSINI

Vincenzo, I have learned the King of France
Here stands in peril of his very life,
And she who seeks his life, a common maid,
A Milanese, is lodged with our own Pezzo.
His Majesty would have her hither led
To search the causes of her treasonry
Or haply be assured she is no more.

VINCENZO

This is impossible.

KING

Your father speaks.
And with him speak the Medici and France.

ORSINI

I know not why you instantly rebel.
Needs there my harsh command to drive you to it
Or will you wiselier bethink who asks?

VINCENZO

Nothing can shake me from my fixt resolve:
The Milanese I will not hither lead
Nor will I helpless see her rudely touched.

(Bells are heard)

KING

Then let this boy, Orsini, be at ease.
Send men to Pezzo, seize her in my name.

ORSINI

At once. . . . Ceppi, I say!

VINCENZO

Father, what right
Hath Charles of France to rob your servant's
house?
Am I not something here? Have I no claim
Upon your mind or heart?

OF THE KING

ORSINI

You do forget:
I bade my son bring her into my presence.

VINCENZO

'Tis you forget: I had a mother, too;
Princely her blood, equally swims with yours
Here in my veins. Were she alive, with me
She'd cry, "Why just this woman?"

(Bells and shouts)

ORSINI

Wherefore not?
She is no Florentine, she comes from Milan;
We lose no blood, she is a trivial price
To pay for Medici—

VINCENZO

A price, O father?
At last Orsini's name and purse are one!
It is the Medici she buys for you?
A human soul passed like a filthy coin
From rakish palm to palm as in a mart!
Have you no shame? You would destroy her
thus?

KING

She is my property.

VINCENZO

Nay, hear me speak.
I tell you that I love her—so, she's mine,
Mine by the ruddy tribute of dear vows
Since me she also loves. Her I will wed
And honor her as wife.

(Bells...Cries of "Palle!")

ORSINI

Less passion, son.
I am a stranger to your sudden vows,

THE SUMMONS

VINCENZO

O father, hear me. None has thrall'd me so;
But only she seems beautiful and worthy
Of worship, tho she be of lowly birth.

KING (*coolly*)

And leman of my choice.

ORSINI

You flout me, King?

KING

Nay, boys have dreams—'tis kings wear waking
crowns.

(*Bells increase. Cries of "Palle! Palle!"*)

ORSINI

Son, know you this forsooth?

VINCENZO

What was, is not.

ORSINI

Thou odious destroyer of this line!
But now didst hold the name of mother there
On that same threshold where this rankness stood?
There is no more to say. Herein persist
And I will never know thee more my son.

VINCENZO

Father—

ORSINI

You know me and you heard me judge.
I bid you aid them hale the strumpet hither.

VINCENZO

May God remember thee in His good time!
Again I say I will not. Glory of house

OF THE KING

Nor France can force me to this foul design.
For Medici you have forget your son,
For Medici you would sell all the state.
It means naught what the woman was, when I,
Your son, find her thought-pure and true of soul,
And swear I love her so I count death cheap
To save her from the hands corrupt of France.
You shall not have her! Free is Florence, free!
The gold of Medici, the might of France,
The craft of you, my sire and princes all,
Shall not prevail. A human girdle guards
This palace where you plan old slavery;
But even as I came the rumor flew,
The secret is on every beggar's tongue,
The warning cries are—hear them!—"Palle!
Palle!"

And every belfry clamors from the sting
And bitter thought of Medici restored.
Unless you swift bethink you calm the crowd,
King Charles will nevermore behold his France!

(Cries increase. KING and others stand transfixed)

Come, speak, I go. What shall I feed them with?
What is your answer? Medici or freedom?
(Pause)

KING

Go. Bid them hush their bells. The King would sleep.

THE SUMMONS

ACT FIVE

SCENE ONE

The KING before the Signory. The next day.

KING, CARDINAL ST MALO, COURTIER; CAPPONI,
VESPUCCI, BONSI, VALORI, and other Florentines

VALORI

Your Majesty has learned how Milan shakes
Her yoke—how Ludovico is the master?

CARDINAL ST MALO

He hath been so possesst; that Pisa, too,
Hath risen 'gainst your state, he must regard
But proof how woful was their course who ban-
isht

The Medici or ere a better found.
Yet is his counsel one of clement peace,
In sign whereof he hath despatcht to Pisa
A gallant force to hold the rebels leal
To Florence out of love he bears you all.

VESPUCCI

'Tis well we find his friendly will to us,
Else were it hard to check from wrong the plebs:
They have not yet forgotten Swiss excess.
We must assure them from all arrogance.

CARDINAL ST MALO

Untimely themes become us not, good sir.

VESPUCCI

God keep you of that mind till we have done.

OF THE KING

CARDINAL ST MALO

You have our promise to retrench our stay
And soon advance us southward unto Rome.
With Pisa bound to us, and so to you,
What greater warranty that we are just?

VESPUCCI

I question not, I simply hope, else would
Our own Marzocco by the angered hands
Of citizens against our trusted power
Soon measure every foot of Arno's depth.

KING

And there lies now, his lily-shield defiled.
But truce to threats! We are not come to aim
And shoot the windy missiles of the mouth,
But to define, conclude, and keep a treaty.
Your wisest man is silent. Speak, Capponi,
Is all agreed and written that we sign?

CAPPONI

All has been noted and agreed; but one
Included title has not been full sounded.
The Signory doth grant and herewith call
The King of France Defender and Protector
Of Florence and her new-born Liberty,
And votes the King the florins he demands.
'Tis well; yet would I learn from living lips,
With these our witnesses, to hear your vow
You are no friend to Medici, nor aim
To arm and bolden him, when you are forth,
To steal within our gates and seize again
The sovereignty whereof he's dispossesst.

KING

Is this, Capponi, what the silence nursed?
Have we not given pledge, nay, more than pledge?
Take you no earnest from our acts, but we
Must hunted be with aye-distrusting eyes

THE SUMMONS

And gliding treachery? Do you so deal
With sister states when hand and seal are passed?
If so it be, at Pisa's eager shift
And Milan's hate I take small wonderment.
For all your Signory, more than is writ
We will not bend us, masters as we stand,
To calm for aye the Medicean string.
To judge you have our deeds. We speak not further.

CAPPONI

We own us no less masters than the King:
We are the peers not vassals of your might;
We ratify not tolerate your counsel.

KING

What of the garrisons we have despatcht
From Pisa hither, are they ours or yours?
Can we not at a signal start them out?

SAVONAROLA

(before unobserved, stepping forward)

But will not, King. *(Pause)*

KING.

What, friar, a councilor?

CARDINAL ST MALO *(aside to KING)*

Fear not, count on the nobles not the mob.

SAVONAROLA

I speak for stricken souls where'er they lodge.

KING

How will you stand against us, question right
To teach the Signory a quiet tongue?
Wherefore may we not order at our will?

OF THE KING

SAVONAROLA

God watches you: His eyelids know not rest.

KING

You hailed us at our coming, God's anointed,
Elect to save the remnant of your people.
Why veer you so?

SAVONAROLA

Because you lightly hold
And execute the purpose of your coming;
Because the Medici with money bribes
You stay your hand against his waning hope;
Because you promise what you cannot grant:
Aid to the state, to Medici a throne.
Briefly you conquer, but the Lord is wroth:
Disaster travels with you and disease.
I see your hungry hosts go mountainward
With pennon stained and clouded enginery;
I see your eager face from Naples turn;
Your heart breeds panic and your hands are sick.
As heaven chose you in this mighty fray,
Heaven will curse the king of broken word.

CARDINAL ST MALO (*to* KING)

How long will France give ear?

KING

We are prepared
To step no further, but withhold our seal.
France yet is new to menaces on kings,
And keeps his counsel undismayed by this
Ungrateful body, brave by sufferance.
'Tis you, Capponi, who have stirred this brew
And bid me quaff the cup thus publicly.
The friar I forgive, I think him true;
And yet, I swear, no record shall appear
For or against the exiled Medici.

THE SUMMONS

CAPPONI (*passionately*)

We will not hear you more: you are not just.
We have no proof you truckle not with him,
The common foe and pest of this republic.
What is the parchment but a gaudy cheat,
If you thus boldly mention not our foe?
Have it unsigned, 'tis yours—in fragments thus!

(Tears it and flings it at the KING)

CARDINAL ST MALO

You have o'erstept the bound of arrogance.

SAVONAROLA

Capponi, I must praise against my will
Our foe: the devil hath bereft thy mind.
This meeting is for those who trust their lives
That we will honorably seek their good
Nor by inflamèd anger.

CAPPONI

I am weary
Of waiting till the double King of France
Display a single aim.

VALORI

Why are we laggard?
Tried troops we have, the commons favor arms,
Our courage steeled against these braying guns.
Let us conclude the forage of the horde
Who eat our fields, corrupt our citizens,
And, mocking, chalk our houses, lance on hip.

KING

Words, men, words! Why repeat the empty
boasts?
You fight with a divided host, the nobles

OF THE KING

So ill-disposed they will not lift a hand,
The commons venal, moment friends to freedom
With wills that shift with every deepening eve.
Confirm your vaunt! In fine, we here proclaim
If this assembly fail to consummate
Agreement to our royal will and arms,
Then we will sound our trumpets!

CAPPONI

Trumpets, King?
Then we will sound our bells.

*(Long pause and great uproar. Enter
unobserved, RABACCIO.)*

VALORI *(to CAPPONI)*

Oh, speak the word!

(Pause)

SAVONAROLA

I would not hold myself a man of peace
Unto dishonor's edge, but all this scene
Seems acted by capricious, pouting children.
Here stands the King of France from royal pride
Not to be moved to write a word exacted,
While there Capponi, puffed with sudden power,
Imperils Florence and her liberty
With insult to her plighted friend who aims,
I certain think, no treachery on us.
I spare not either side; it is a mock
That fate so large from hands so small depends.
Such ribaldry with offices of God
Ye both shall dear abide.

BONSI

My gracious lords,
There is much wisdom in the friar's words.
His deeds and thought no dark, suspicious brow
Can shade to shame, but out of general heart
He bids us put aside unworthy chiding

THE SUMMONS

And summons both to concord. Let none deem
I yield my pride who counsel courtesy
And milder modes: the Bonsi can be hard
And brave at dangerous need, you all allow.
Valori, curb thy captain's itch to plant
A spear or prick the liver of a Frenchman;
And you, Capponi, prop of public weal,
Sway with the wind, nor fear you bend to fall.

CARDINAL ST MALO

Were I the King, I should not tarry long
For further parley, but exalt our pennons
And give their perilous wings unto the air
Against your conquered and divided land.
Such bruit my guns would spread as would make
 bow
Your tufted pines and thrill your mountain-tops.

KING

Such words, good Cardinal, flying unquenched
Might start a conflagration far and wide;
Therefore be pleased to lodge th' unhappy
 thought
I still am king and still have much to do
Before again I see my vineyards smile
And know my subjects press the bellied grape.
Capponi, we are gentle-humored, mark!
And if it please you and the solemn council
That Medici, my friend, be named and writ
The foe of Florence, be it as you will,
We will contend no further. Fate is loud
Against mine ears and stirs our trumpet's drowse
On to imperial Rome and Christ's anointed.
There when the holy hands have touched our
 head
With blessed certainty, our chief emprise
We will set on—to win the throne of Naples.
Meantime let secretaries new indite
An instrument comporting with your wish,
Then send it with your strictest councilors

OF THE KING

After us where we lodge; before noontide
Tomorrow with our sign and seal you hold
Against our deed our pledge and warranty.
Come, Cardinal, we need your cooling prayers
To soothe the cheeks of this too fevered day,
Lest uncommended at God's garden-gate
Of soft, unhasting dreams we knock denied.
So take we leave, well-wishing all. Good night.

(Exeunt KING and COURTIERs, the CARDINAL looking darkly at SAVONAROLA.)

SAVONAROLA

Before I go, I beg you entertain
Not too triumphant hearts. Beyond lies much.
The warrant of the King may doubtless be,
But mind, Capponi, let the bells be guard,
Lest France put motley on our belfrymen. *(Exit)*

VALORI

Ever a sting he thrusts; yet peace advised.

BONSI

Methinks we win. The King regards a threat.

VESPUCCI

But who will meet him with the articles?

CAPPONI

Myself, Valori, Bonsi, and—the Friar.

VALORI

Then let Vespucci go for me.

CAPPONI

Granted.

And so for all who thus their country love
That when a private thought or hate appears,
Drop down their shield and weapons on the field.

THE SUMMONS

VALORI

Oh, I will go.

CAPPONI

No, no, you will not go;
You will observe at home.

BONSI

Oh, have him come.

CAPPONI

Peace, Bonsi. If Valori is offended,
We give him time to heal his aching rancor.
Yet let us home together.

ALL

Aye, together.

(Exeunt. WATCHMEN come forward.)

FIRST WATCHMAN

The lamps were well-nigh spent.

SECOND WATCHMAN

'Twas heavy talk.

FIRST WATCHMAN

I would not fear a king like him of France
For all the cannons and the brass he owns.

SECOND WATCHMAN

Who was it tore the paper in his face?

FIRST WATCHMAN

Capponi is his name, a common man,
In youth, a rogue. How when to age they grow
They fain forget the nuts and fruit they stole.

(Noise)

SECOND WATCHMAN

What's that?

OF THE KING

FIRST WATCHMAN

What?

SECOND WATCHMAN

That. Heard you no noise? Methinks—

FIRST WATCHMAN

Something lies stretched upon that bench.

SECOND WATCHMAN

Where—where?

FIRST WATCHMAN

There! See?

SECOND WATCHMAN

Shall — shall we dare accost?

FIRST WATCHMAN

Are not yet locked, I'll go for instant aid. The doors

SECOND WATCHMAN

And leave me? Jesu, see! he moves.

FIRST WATCHMAN

You roused him, fool! He slept,

SECOND WATCHMAN

Oh, talk not so, this hour
May be our last—then be we friends in death.

FIRST WATCHMAN

We must be bolder. Come, what make you here?
Are you of Florence and you dare to keep—

RABACCIO

What make I here, thou antic, paper face?
I make dead men, and so will make of you,
If you deny me message to the King.

THE SUMMONS

FIRST WATCHMAN

He is no longer here, but gone to lodge
Where dwelt the Medici in times of peace.

RABACCIO

Before he sleeps my message must be heard.
Conduct me thither by your faith in God,
Your love to Florence, and your very lives.

FIRST WATCHMAN

We both will go and see you safe bestowed.

SECOND WATCHMAN (*as they go out*)

You are from Venice, sir?

RABACCIO

No, out of Milan.

*(They are heard talking as they lock the doors
from the outside.)*

SCENE TWO

Near the Rubaconte Bridge. Moonlight. The next evening.

RABACCIO

A good blade alway finds a use for 'ts edge.
Scarce had I told the King how Milan lay
Subject to Ludovico by a trick
And softly questioned his commandment thither,
In hope I made one of a gallant troop
To humble Moro, whom I hate—but nay!
Outwhips his Majesty a new reply,
Denies me rest but bids to intercept
The lovelorn young Orsini, who this night
Would steal a lady of unworthy birth.
How many eyes e'en in a foreign camp
May royalty possess! How many hands—
Far from the waiting brain—for him are busy.

OF THE KING

But had the King enjoined my swift return,
I still had tarried till I had report
How Nuccia fares, how chains her captive lover.
Doubtless my barren purse had pregnant grown;
From her now lofty state a rich despatch
Away for hungry kin were cheaply bought.
This business done, I mean to find her out:
At least an envious rumor of her days
And gorgeous nights I must to Milan bring,
A tickle-tongue for gossips and the stews.
But soft! a woman, veiled and stealthy-stepping:
A moment's hiding ere I spring surprise.

(Hides in deep shadows)

Enter NUCCIA

Too early. How the moon spells all the ways;
The water and the trees, the bridge, the air,
All ghostly. Calmly ride the clouds the sky,
Blameless, fearless of scanning stars. I fain
Had longer waited but I somehow feared;
Almost I knew not when I slipped away,
Drawn like a thread of water to the sea.
A-haste I seemed untouching heavy earth,
So love and the dear dream impelled me forth.
Yet now he is not here, I find my soul
Hath moored far-traveled ships importing dread.
Hold, something shapes and moves—Vincenzo,
ho!

RABACCIO

Fair one, Vincenzo is not yet at hand.
Be not afraid, I have no ill intent.

NUCCIA (*aside*)

Methinks he looks an older man than harms.

RABACCIO

Turn not the comely face away. (*Seizes her*)

THE SUMMONS

NUCCIA

Release

Thy fierce hand, ruffian, or—
(*Tries to stab him*)

RABACCIO (*aside, as he strikes the dagger
out of her hand*)

My God, 'tis Nuccia!

NUCCIA

What mean you?

RABACCIO

Come, my child, behold me close.

NUCCIA (*covering her face in violent
horror*)

Rabaccio! O Vincenzo, where art thou?

RABACCIO

Attempt no folly, briefly learn your fate:
Orsini will not taint his noble blood
With a son's fancy for a faithless wench.
This instant living you will yield to France
Or from yon bridge I drop your body dead.
Your answer!

NUCCIA

Uncle, I entreat you, think!
One fatal day I trusted all to you;
What did you then, you, brother to my mother?
You made me merchandise and for a price
You sold me to the King of France!

RABACCIO

You lie!

NUCCIA

I lie not, I know all. The barter ran,
A common jest, among foul-mouthèd harlots.

OF THE KING

You said I should be queen, and so I was—
A cozened quean, but kin to you, my uncle,
And once the one babe your dead sister bare.
(*Aside*)

Will he ne'er come? (*Aloud*) Another fatal day,
A second time you come: what price this time?
How much will buy you now? I'll give you
more—

RABACCIO

Why do I listen? Tush! Weary of France,
You have enticed a noble Florentine
To your embrace. You are a stain on all
Your kin; your father died a broken man;
I mean to end it here: you shall not twice
Deceive the King of France. (*Seizes her*)

NUCCIA

Vincenzo, help!
Have mercy, uncle! Give me space to pray.

RABACCIO

The need I question not—your craft is plain:
Tell Mary face to face who cozened you!
(*Stabs her*)

Enter VINCENZO

Who spake my name?

NUCCIA (*faintly*)

Vincenzo?

VINCENZO

Where are you?

NUCCIA

Hard by the bank. Let not—

VINCENZO

Who runs there?

THE SUMMONS

NUCCIA

After!

(VINCENZO parries a thrust from RABACCIO,
who, after a struggle, falls and dies)

They fight, may God forgive my lingering.
Who fell? Vincenzo, speak.

VINCENZO

'Twas he.

NUCCIA

God reigns.

VINCENZO

What heavy woe is here? Whose hand?

NUCCIA

From Milan hither—met me by design—
My uncle—

VINCENZO

My love, you are too weak to frame the words.
You soon will mend; have courage, Nuccia, courage.

NUCCIA

We cannot cheat our fate, nor he nor I.

VINCENZO

Fate is not ever hopeless, ever dark.

NUCCIA

He made dispute, and urged I stained your house.

VINCENZO (*aside*)

My father's hand?

NUCCIA

And faithless, too, to France.

OF THE KING

VINCENZO (*aside*)

Mayhap the King. (*Goes to RABACCIO. Aloud*)
Cold, cold, and has not moved.
'Tis well, else Milan, aye, all Italy
Were small to hold your uncle from my reach.

NUCCIA

No time for hate.

VINCENZO

Nay, for thou art to live.

NUCCIA

Not that, but I will never leave thy soul.

VINCENZO

No more. I'll bind thy wound and bring thee
safe

Across the bridge, where Pezzo mild with skill
Will soon assuage the pain and mount us swift
Upon our steed straight for Fiesole.
There in a wooded, sheltered, dear retreat
Now dwells my aged nurse, a sweet-voiced crone.
Who waits for us with warring fear and joy:
Before the dead stars fall in glorious tombs,
I shall halloo an old-time, boyhood catch,
And she will hear and cry "Vincenzo's come!"
And France and sin shall be forgotten clean,
His Naples yet unwon, and I shall hear
Echoed among the fearless, fragrant pines
The Milan song that stayed a foreign king
But gave thy soul to me. Come, love, cling close.

(VINCENZO *hurries with* NUCCIA *across
the bridge*)

THE END

